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"...love...in deed and in truth"

A MESSAGE FOR RACE RELATIONS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1960

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*"But if any one has the world's goods
and sees his brother in need, yet
closes his heart against him, how does
God's love abide in him? Little children,
let us not love in word or speech, but in
deed and in truth." I John 3:17-18*

(Revised Standard Version)

The First Letter of John stresses that Christian love is universal and unrestricted, but the writer of the Letter is not content to leave it at this point. Love must express itself in practical situations. It must be demonstrated concretely where we live, work, play and worship. This is made clear in the question, "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" The writer's reply to his own question is equally clear. Moffatt's translation puts it well, "My dear children, let us put our love not into words or into talk but into deeds and make it real."

In far too many instances love is not practised in the current pattern of racial relationships in this country. The superior-inferior status which is accorded people on the basis of their race results not only in broken fellowship but, even worse, in estrangement and, at times, in open conflict. Remember some other words in First John, "He who does not love remains in death."

There is little evidence that the attitudes of Christians about race are very different from those of people who do not profess to be Christians. Too often, within the churches, we hear Christians referred to as "Negro brethren", "white brethren", or "Indian brethren", instead of as just "the brethren". The involvement of the Christian movement in the current pattern of racial relationships is highlighted by frequent and casual referrals to "white churches", "Negro churches", "Chinese churches" and to other racial designations before the word "church".

We must not stop with a mere indictment. Much has been done to make Christians aware that racial segregation is sinful. Many churches are working to eliminate it from their practices. Experience has shown that the racial composition of the area which a community organization serves, tends to reflect itself in the constituency or membership of the organization. For instance, if the community is composed of people of one race, more than likely the church in that community will be composed of people of the same race.

The elimination of racial segregation in housing is essential if the churches are to serve people on a racially inclusive basis and if Christians are to overcome estrangement as well as to bind up the broken fellowship in our society. Non-white people are denied the right to rent or purchase property of their choice because of their race. This denial forces the majority of them to live in segregated and overcrowded urban areas. It is a story of housing which is inferior in quality and quantity. According to the 1950 United States Census, 70 per cent of all non-white families lived in dwellings which were dilapidated or had in-

adequate plumbing. Available evidence seems to indicate that substantially the same situation prevails today. The continued migration of non-white people to urban areas where they must live in racial ghettos, whose boundaries change very slowly, causes overcrowding. No matter what the race of the people occupying it, overcrowded housing deteriorates, breeding slum conditions in the area. The material, health and social costs of slums to the whole community are readily discernible. What is less discernible are the spiritual and psychological costs.

Equally tragic are the costs to individuals. This is revealed in the efforts of non-white families to escape from slum areas. They may have the money to purchase or rent housing and the character, education and ability to make a creative contribution to any community. Nevertheless, fruitless visits to many real estate brokers make them feel they are regarded as "lesser breeds without the law". Even if they are able to purchase or rent a dwelling of their choice, there is the question of the conduct of their "white" neighbors. The spiritual and psychological costs to the non-white family are considerable, but what of the others? Are there spiritual and psychological costs to those who perpetuate this or who acquiesce in it? These people have the world's goods, property. They see their brother's need, yet close their hearts against him. Can they love God?

How do we love in deed? How do we make love real? Many churches and individual Christians work for the right of every person to acquire adequate housing on the basis of personal preference and financial ability without regard to race, national origin or religion. They root their convictions in the Christian gospel which teaches that God has given all men intrinsic worth. Moreover, they must be concerned because adequate housing is an important factor in contributing to the spiritual, moral and material strength of family life as well as to the development of character, spiritual insight and our God-given talents. This type of effort is the responsibility of every Christian.

Many people are concerned about the problem. But often we express our love only in words. Surely we have heard people say, "I would sell my house to anyone able to buy it regardless of race, but what would my neighbors say?" Should the wishes of a neighbor transcend the Christian responsibility to respect the intrinsic worth which God in Christ has given to all men? This is illustrative of the fact that many people of potential goodwill feel that they are forced to acquiesce in the perpetuation of the evil of housing discrimination and segregation. How can we do this and really love God?

We express our love in deeds, as Christians, when we sell or rent property to persons on the basis of their personal preference and financial ability without regard to race. Churches as well as individual Christians can make their love real when they welcome people as good neighbors regardless of race and when they use their influence to see that the community guarantees to people the right to acquire property without regard to race. They have a high moral responsibility to exercise leadership in creating and maintaining the racially inclusive character of their communities. These are practical demonstrations of love which will contribute to overcoming the estrange-

ment and to binding up the broken fellowship which racial discrimination and segregation have caused in the Christian community. Such practical demonstrations will serve as a witness which will lead individuals and society to express love in deeds.

"Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth."

The original draft of this message was prepared by
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HOUSING AND RACE 91053

No fewer than twenty-seven million Americans, or nearly one-sixth of the population of the United States, are being denied to a greater or lesser degree the traditional American privilege of freedom to move and to choose one's place of residence because of their race, color or ethnic attachment.

Thus reads the Report of the Commission on Race and Housing, *Where Shall We Live?* (Berkeley 4: Univ. of California Press, 1958. \$1.50, paper)

The Commission on Race and Housing "is an independent citizens' group formed in 1955 for the purpose of inquiring into problems of residence and housing involving racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States."

Inquiries by this 17-member commission, consisting of educators, business men, lawyers and publishers, extended over the three-year period 1955-1958 and were designed "to conduct an impartial study comprehending all important aspects of the subject and conforming to the highest standards of scientific research."

Finances were obtained from the Fund for the Republic, Inc. The cooperation of many agencies representing civil rights groups, religious organizations, and financial and real estate interests was secured.

Research for the Commission was directed by Davis McEntire, professor of social welfare, University of California, Berkeley. Cooperation came from leading social scientists at a dozen universities at various points during the study.

Where Shall We Live? summarizes the main findings of some thirty special studies and research memoranda dealing with the problem of "inequality of housing opportunity connected with minority group status, both in general and with specific reference to four groups: Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and Orientals." Brief descriptions of the thirty special studies and research memoranda are found in the Appendix.

"Racial Discrimination in Housing"

"Housing and residence . . . have proved probably the most resistant of all fields to demands [by nonwhites] for equal treatment."

"In no area of life are the disadvantages of minority groups more visible than in housing." Minority groups in larger cities, especially in the North and West, "have typically lived concentrated in the oldest sections of each city, districts abandoned by previous groups, with buildings deteriorated through age and neglect."

"The American people may not yet be ready to grant full equality to minorities but obviously they wish to hear about the facts and problems."

"Problems of discrimination in housing have come especially to the fore in connection with public programs of slum clearance or urban renewal." Attempts to rehouse in non-slum areas the displaced, who are usually members of minority groups, collide with segregation barriers.

Other factors that magnify the significance of racial inequality have been the migration of millions of Negroes from the South to the North and West and from farms to cities since the beginning of World War II and an unprecedented exodus of whites from the larger cities to the suburbs.

"Supports for Segregation"

"Minority communities, apparently, notwithstanding their generally unenviable living conditions, possess a considerable stability of their own. . . ."

"Poverty is a major factor of residential stability." Low incomes of minority families demand the cheaper housing to be found abundantly in older and deteriorated residential areas.

"The housing demand of nonwhites is further limited by their tendency to spend a smaller part of their resources for housing than do whites, regardless of income."

The security of the ethnic colony surrounded by an unfriendly world acts as an additional support for segregation.

Negroes are forced to develop a group life of their own. Seldom accepted in white society, they must look to other members of their race for almost the whole range of associational opportunities. Negroes have developed various social institutions, above all the church, which serve them as a unifying force."

"The group cohesion or self-segregation of Negroes in cities of the North and West is currently affected by two major kinds of change. On the one hand, the number of Negroes with incomes and cultural outlook of the middle class is increasing rapidly. At the same time, the ranks of the poor and culturally retarded Negroes are constantly replenished by migration from the South. Very different perspectives of housing characterize the two extremes. For the foreseeable future, the mass of poor and 'unassimilated' Negroes will probably provide a large population for the 'Negro Ghetto'. The growing middle class, with little in common with the lower group save color, will undoubtedly press with rising insistence for the opportunity to live like other Americans of their social level."

Resistance to nonwhite neighbors by whites has ranged from mere acts of avoidance to dynamiting homes acquired by nonwhites.

The "pressure of whites to reject nonwhite neighbors is not universal or uniform. In virtually every large city with a biracial or multiracial population, and in many smaller cities as well, there are residence areas of racially mixed occupancy."

In the United States, there is a conflict between attitudes on the levels of principle and practice, respectively, but the trend of white attitudes is toward tolerance.

Generalized racial prejudice is supported in the community by a number of rather specific fears.

Under the general heading of status fears there are two basic considerations: "first, nonwhite color and certain ethnic origins are identified with low status in American society; second, a family shares to a large extent the status of its neighbors, and the neighborhood one lives in is a measure of his social position."

"Fears of interracial marriage, it may be noted, are part of the status problem."

Loss of property value is another fear which supports segregation. "In the whole field of housing and race, probably no idea is more widely and firmly held than the belief that entry of nonwhites into a neighborhood causes property values to fall." This belief is held by many real estate brokers, mortgage lenders, and property appraisers almost as an article of faith. Actually, studies made of this hypothesis found some supporting evidence for it but in other observed cases "the movement of property values has been contrary to the popular belief. The outcome is affected by various factors other than the actual movement of nonwhites into a neighborhood."

Fear of inundation by minority groups "is often a significant motive, first, to exclusion, and second, to white evacuation of areas entered by nonwhites." In many cases where racial transition takes place, the area "had largely ceased to be attractive to the white population even before the entry of nonwhites. . . . As for nonwhite entry into neighborhoods still competitive in the white market, evidence indicates that whites will often remain and continue to buy into the area so long as the nonwhite proportion of the population is relatively small and does not lead to expectations that the neighborhood will become all nonwhite."

Fear for personal safety "is a powerful motive to exodus of the remaining whites and a stimulant to race prejudice in other areas." However, "the prevalence of juvenile crime, gang activity, and other pathology in many areas of minority concentration is attributable to social conditions in those areas rather than to race or ethnic origin as such."

Damaging Consequences of Residential Segregation

Residential segregation leads to segregation in other areas of life—"schools, churches, hospitals, places of public accommodations, recreation, and welfare and civic activities."

Segregation by compulsion is itself discrimination and it exposes the segregated group to more discrimination because being set apart spacially, "it becomes very easy to neglect their needs or to discriminate against them."

The restrictions of minority groups to certain areas of cities in the North and West and the increase of minority population leads to the chronic shortage of housing available to minorities. This leads to overcrowding in dwelling space, doubling of families, and the subdivision of dwellings into smaller units.

"Nonwhites purchasing homes receive, on the whole, less favorable terms of mortgage credit than do white home buyers. This is not due so much to direct discrimination by lending institutions as to the poorer quality of the nonwhites' properties, a handicap deriving from segregation."

"... Segregation also deprives nonwhites of equal participation in the government housing programs. Housing conforming to FHA insured loan standards is very scarce in the slums and blighted areas, and nonwhites are not permitted to live in the areas where most government-aided housing is being built."

Psychological effects of compulsory segregation are harmful to the segregated groups producing "frustration, hopelessness, and hostility." The result of segregation on the personality development of minority children is damaging.

Segregation in Community and Nation

First, segregation "handicaps the members of minority groups and obstructs their economic and social progress." When individuals are denied the opportunity to develop their potentialities, the whole community suffers as well as the individual himself.

Secondly, residential segregation aggravates the problems of slum clearance and urban renewal. Plans for urban renewal usually "contemplate the re-use of slum areas, after rebuilding, by higher income groups than previously occupied them, or reuse for non-residential purposes."

Since municipal agencies "are seldom prepared to challenge racial segregation," the minorities relocate in slum or blighted areas which "intensifies the crowding there, while threatening an over-all net reduction in the living space available to minorities."

"Apart from urban renewal problems, the expansion of residence areas open to minority groups frequently takes place in a manner and under circumstances conducive to the formation of slums. . . . The deterioration of housing and neighborhood conditions which often occurs with racial transition is not racially caused but results from the nature of the transition process itself, the socio-economic status of the groups involved, and the character of the properties."

Thirdly, "group prejudice is basically a habit of looking upon members of certain groups not as individuals but as groups, and attributing the same characteristics to all."

Lastly, "the problem of racial inequality in the United States is no longer a purely domestic issue; it vitally affects the foreign relations of the country."

"Toward Equality of Opportunity"

Among various measures to reduce racial discrimination and promote equality of rights and opportunities in the field of housing and residence are the judicial decisions rendered by the Supreme Court. "More than four decades ago, the Court settled decisively that local governments could not establish racial residential segregation by law. In 1948, the Court extended this principle to restrain courts, as branches of governments, from enforcing private agreements for racial segregation."

State and municipal legislation over the past dozen years has moved toward racial equality "in employment, housing, public accommodations, education and other areas."

The most comprehensive laws relating to discrimination in housing affected with a public character are those in force in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Washington.

"Most contemporary students . . . hold that law can be a

potent force for changing social habits and indirectly can modify attitudes."

Federal administrative and executive action has been taken by various Presidents to secure "equal treatment of citizens in their relationship with the government."

"The major racial issue in the housing programs of the Federal government is how far the government should go in controlling the discriminatory practices of private business and local public agencies in the distribution of Federal housing benefits. The Federal agencies have largely, it not completely eliminated racial discrimination so far as their own internal operations are concerned."

The housing agencies of the government have developed "several devices for assisting minorities to obtain housing." They are the Federal National Mortgage Association, the Racial Relations Advisers and the Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program.

Civil rights organizations "have played and doubtless will continue to play a central role in the movement toward racial equality of opportunity."

"Increasingly, the churches of America are defining racial inequality as a moral problem and urging solutions by application of Christian and Jewish religious principles. Many public pronouncements . . . have been made by religious leaders of all major faiths." [The Race Relations Sunday Message, appearing above is one such public message on Christian principles and housing.]

Some Underlying Principles of the Commission

The fundamental principles of the American social order and form of government are both political and religious in nature.

Equality of all citizens before the law, properly construed means "equal treatment of citizens in all their relations with government, including equal access to and equal rights of participation in all facilities and benefits provided by public authority."

There are, of course, conflicts of rights, "and therefore some principle must be found for determining which rights are superior." In public affairs "the superiority of rights to equal treatment is clear on principle."

In the private sphere of activity, however, "there remains the question of whether the freedom of individuals to discriminate should be curtailed."

Private activities affected with a public interest may justifiably be subjected to control in the public interest. "In housing, the decisions of an individual property owner concerning the occupancy of a single dwelling may not be thought to involve a substantial public interest. But when private business affects the housing opportunities for thousands or millions of people, it must acknowledge a responsibility to the public."

Minorities in housing situations are confronted not only with prejudice but with "the power of organized groups to determine where he shall or shall not live." The limitation of the power of such organizations "would be in no way inconsistent with respect for individual liberty."

Turning to the "asserted right 'to choose one's neighbors'" the Commission said "there are some circumstances in which neighbors actually are chosen, as in private clubs, some small cooperatives, certain religious or fraternal colonies." But choice, to have any meaning, must imply a personal relationship among the chosen, analogous to that of personal friends or house guests. There is, however, no choosing of neighbors in ordinary residential areas where dwellings are offered on the housing market.

The Commission also pointed out the following: (1) "Compulsory residential segregation is the basic inequality that underlies or stimulates other forms of discrimination . . . (2) "Measures for equal opportunity should aim at moderating prejudices as well as reducing discrimination, but the latter should be the focus of direct attention. . . . In housing . . . the most important forms of discrimination are not those directly connected with the prejudices of people, but are represented in the practices of governments and the housing industry" (3) "Education and action should be regarded not as alternatives but as complimentary methods of working for racial equality of opportunity."

The Recommendations

The Commission made the following recommendations. *The Federal Government.*—The Commission noted that Congress has declared our national policy in housing to be "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family" and related to it is "the elimination of substandard and blighted areas."

Federal housing agencies have some policies "which encourage or permit racial distinctions in the distribution of Federal housing benefits. . . ." "We recommend to the President of the United States that he establish a committee on the elimination of discrimination in Federal housing and urban renewal programs. . . ." (2) We recommend . . . that Federal housing agencies give, without delay, the fullest support to state and municipal legislation for equal treatment in housing. (3) Because of the vital role of local government in many aspects of housing, it is essential that members of minority groups participate fully in the political processes through which local officers . . . are selected. Restrictions on voting rights or other barriers to such participation should be removed. . . ."

Federal-Local Programs.—The Commission recommends " . . . that Federal and local housing and urban renewal authorities intensify their efforts to increase the total housing supply." Especially needed is housing for middle- and lower-income groups. (2) Urban renewal authorities "should recognize as a primary responsibility, the opening of adequate housing opportunities for displaced families, most of whom belong to minority groups." (3) Urban renewal programs should conserve and rehabilitate housing in areas "undergoing racial transition, to maintain good housing standards. Special effort should be made to stabilize these areas on an interracial basis. (4) Urban renewal authorities "should actively promote housing developments on open land with unrestricted occupancy, within the incomes of a substantial number of families in central areas. . . ." (5) "Authorities in charge of low-rent public housing should vigorously combat the tendency for public housing projects to become low-income racial 'ghettos'. . . ."

State Governments.—The Commission recommends (1) " . . . Repeal of all existing laws requiring racial segregation." (2) That state legislatures enact legislation "prohibiting discrimination in housing" and at minimum these laws should "apply to all housing built or financed by any form of public aid. . . ." (3) Enforcement agencies of state governments should have four types of authority to prevent discrimination in housing: "(a) Power to act upon complaints of violation" utilizing voluntary methods or, if necessary, by issuing orders and applying to Courts for enforcement. "(b) Authority to investigate reported practices of discrimination . . . independent of complaints from aggrieved individuals" and to initiate compliance proceedings. "(c) Authority to investigate complaints of discriminatory application of state and local laws relating to land use or housing and to make public the findings of such investigations. (d) Authority . . . to conduct programs of research, information and education to encourage public acceptance of an open housing market."

Local Governments.—"In the absence of state laws, we recommend that municipal legislative bodies adopt laws of the type recommended above to states. . . ."

The Housing Industry.—" (1) We recommend to builders, mortgage lenders, and real estate brokers that they conform to the principle of a free housing market and study the experience of financially successful interracial housing developments. . . ." (2) In order to counteract the reluctance of individual builders to admit nonwhites to their developments, "we recommend . . . to national and local associations of the housing industry that they take the lead in effecting a concerted, industry-wide policy . . . [to open all housing developments to qualified buyers or tenants without regard to race, ethnic descent, or religion.]" (3) "Mortgage lenders should singly or collectively discontinue the practice of limiting loans to nonwhite borrowers in certain residential districts." "(4) . . . We recommend that real estate boards take the positive step of declaring that realtors should offer listed residential properties to any qualified purchaser or renter without regard to racial or religious distinction unless the principal has in writing directed limitation of a particular transaction to certain groups. (5) We urge trade associations of the housing industry, including real estate boards, mortgage banker associations, and builders' associations, to drop color bars to membership. . . ."

Intergroup Relations Organizations.—The recommendations of the Commission in this area called for the development of effectual programs for promoting equality of opportunity in housing emphasizing combined action and community education and encouraging the institutions mentioned in the recommendations, and others both public and private, to work for these ends. Specific recommendations were set forth in the Report.

A Note on Future Publications

The University of California Press (Berkeley, 4) publishes this month three titles: *Property Values and Race* by Luigi Laurenti; *Studies in Housing and Minority Groups*, edited by Nathan Glazer and Davis McEntire; and, *Privately Developed Interracial Housing*, by Eunice and George Grier. Each sells for \$6.

Tentatively scheduled for late 1960 are: *The Demand for Housing in Racially Mixed Areas*, by Chester Rapkin and W. G. Grigsby, and *Residence and Race*; final and comprehensive report to the Commission on Race and Housing, by Davis McEntire. All the above titles are published for the Commission on Race and Housing.

The matter in these pages is presented for the reader's information. Unless so stated, it is not to be construed as reflecting the attitudes or positions of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations or of The National Council of Churches.

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